



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

BETHESDA 14, MD.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

July 5, 1957

Dear Mr. Fogarty:

Your letter with the attached inquiry from Mrs. Charles R. Capace has been carefully reviewed by members of the Heart Institute staff.

Dicumarol and other similar anticoagulants are important new weapons in the physician's medicine cabinet. The American Heart Association has specifically advised the use of anticoagulants in patients suffering from congestive heart failure (dropsy) and in patients who have recently suffered myocardial infarctions (coronary thromboses). One of the common ways of administering these drugs is a daily dose schedule over an indefinite period of time, the length of treatment being determined by the physician, specific for individual patient's condition, rather than by any set rule.


For the medical profession as a whole there are some unsettled questions. There are many physicians who believe its use should be confined to certain carefully selected cases. There is general agreement that such drugs should not be used unless the physician can see the patient at regular intervals and has available the laboratory facilities which will allow careful evaluation and control of the anticoagulant effect.

A physician who is not acquainted with the details of a case may speak in generalities, but very often such generalizations are not applicable to a specific case. Thus, it is difficult to offer a considered opinion unless one knows the clinical details

concerning the patient and any heart attack the patient has experienced. It is equally difficult for a non-medical person to gain sufficient understanding to serve as a basis for such a decision. The only logical approach to such a problem is to place the patient in the care of an experienced and capable physician and follow his advice. The patient and his family must have complete confidence in the physician's recommendations.

I hope that this information will be helpful in answering Mrs. Capace's questions. If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to call on me.

Sincerely yours,



James Watt, M.D.

Director  
National Heart Institute

Hon. John E. Fogarty  
House of Representatives

Enclosures